



VSTA

# Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

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## **2014-2015 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

Vancouver Board of Education  
Committee III / V



April 14, 2014

# VSTA RESPONSE TO 2014-2015 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association thanks you for the opportunity to respond to the Board's preliminary budget proposals for 2014/15. We recognize that the Vancouver Board of Education is faced, yet again, with the increasingly difficult task of producing a balanced operating budget within the constraints of the provincial government's downloading of costs and chronic underfunding of public education. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, inadequate funding for public education continues to erode services for Vancouver students, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The projected budget shortfall of \$12.34 million will no doubt result in a further erosion of services for Vancouver students.

To minimize the negative impact on the classroom and to ensure continuation of the mandate of "success for every student," the VSTA formally requests that the Board consider the following remarks. Please note that this written submission is not necessarily prioritized. All of our comments, questions, and recommendations are consistent with our core belief that stability and maintenance of direct services to students should underlie all budgetary considerations.

## **1. Commit sufficient instructional staffing to ensure full compliance with class size limits at the secondary level**

The number one priority for secondary teachers remains the same as it has been since Article 9 was illegally stripped (by Bill 28) from our Collective Agreement in 2002: a decision that has been upheld twice by the BC Supreme Court as unconstitutional and invalid. Data compiled by the VSTA reveals that as of October 1, 2013, there were 986 secondary classes with 4 or more students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). For over a decade now, Vancouver students have not known a time when teachers were not struggling for improvements to this district's working and learning conditions. The VSTA recommends that there not be a further reduction of 12.79 FTE teachers (as per the base budget) and that the teaching staff at City School (1.0 FTE), South Vancouver Learning Centre (0.686 FTE) and Eagle High Alternative (1.0 FTE) be maintained at their current levels.

## **2. Increase non-enrolling teachers to meet diverse learners' needs**

Counsellors, teacher-librarians, and resource teachers are essential to the day to day work of the classroom teacher and the success of students. As a result of successive budgetary decisions, reductions to non-enrolling teachers have been felt across the entire district. Additionally, years of reductions and amalgamations to special needs and alternate programs have directly impacted many of our neediest and most vulnerable students. There is also *a pressing need to disaggregate the non-enrolling staffing entitlements* given to schools to ensure that a base line of service exists in all areas in all secondary schools. The VSTA recommends that the VSB commits to a re-examination of non-enrolling staffing levels/ratios.

### **3. Strict adherence to the staffing entitlements for secondary school-based administrators**

The staffing entitlement for secondary school-based administration in 2007/08 was 45.1428, while the actual number of administrators assigned was 52 FTE. In 2013/14, the entitlement was 40.2863 and the number assigned was 52 FTE. *This is approximately 12 positions over the entitlement.* In fact, every secondary school embellishes/increases the size of its administrative team through the use of teaching blocks. While there has been an overall decrease in the number of students and teacher FTE since 2007/08, there has not been a corresponding change in the numbers of school-based administrators (see chart). Further, to suggest that administrators may be using blocks for instructional purposes is not a cost saving; rather, it is the most expensive teaching in the district. The VSTA recommends that the Board staff schools with the number of administrators they are entitled to under the formula.

Figure 1.1.3 of the 2014/15 Fiscal Framework document provides further evidence of this practice/trend. The Board's data for "Staffing by Type" shows 3,186.34 FTE for teachers in 2008/09 and 3,053.39 FTE in 2013/14: a DECREASE of 132.95 FTE. In contrast, the numbers for principals/vice-principals are 198.30 FTE for 2009/09 and 199.39 FTE for 2013/14: an INCREASE of 1.09 FTE. During this same period, the student/staff ratio has actually improved for principals/vice-principals from 288.01 to 271.11.

### **4. Provide adequate funding for learning resources and teacher in-service training opportunities to support revised curriculum and the BC Education Plan**

Ongoing development of curricula in a variety of subject areas means that new resources to support and implement these courses must be found. Funding for these resources must be factored into any budget setting exercise. The BC Education Plan has a very large agenda and while teachers are supportive of many of the changes, its successful implementation requires both a strategy and resources.

The BC Education Plan is ambitious and the revised curriculum represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. Teacher involvement is a key component of successful implementation of educational change; consequently, there must be in-service opportunities for teachers to develop/extend the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement the new curricular directions. Teacher enthusiasm is not enough: concrete supports are essential if a "transformation" is to be achieved.

### **5. Mentors and Consultants**

While the VSTA acknowledges and recognizes that a conscious attempt has been made to keep the cuts away from the classroom, it is important to recognize the invaluable role that mentors and consultants play in supporting classroom teachers and their students. A further reduction of 2.6 FTE (1.4 Literacy/0.2 Anti-Racism/1.0 English Language Learner) will no doubt result in a further erosion of services for our most vulnerable students.

### **6. Peer to Peer Mentors**

The peer to peer mentors provide ongoing, *confidential* support to teachers who are struggling with their assignment and/or require assistance with the day to day operation of a classroom. Individuals accessing this support include TTOCs, those new to the profession/district, and experienced teachers. This employee support program has proven to be highly successful, particularly as the demands of our work have become increasingly more complex and stressful due to budgetary constraints.

The VSTA strongly recommends, yet again this year, that these positions be retained as an ongoing support for teacher wellness and professional growth. The budget proposal to create two new positions for the Health and Attendance Support Program to oversee employee absenteeism while simultaneously eliminating the peer to peer mentors both defies logic and undermines the Board's professed goal of promoting "employee wellness." Peer to peer mentors are often the first step in supporting struggling teachers and their very existence is indicative of the employer's proactive approach and authentic commitment to employee wellness and support.

## **7. Wellness and Attendance Support Program**

While the VSTA agrees that the health of all employees is critical for "creating a healthy and rewarding work environment," we continue to question the efficacy and underlying assumptions of the Wellness and Attendance Support Program, particularly the third module: attendance support. The proposal to create two additional positions (at a cost of \$177,000) to oversee and manage employee attendance seems counterintuitive at a time when teachers are facing unprecedented demands in the classroom. Additionally, in reviewing the 2012-13 audited statements of EOC salaries (for all employee groups) as a percentage of total salaries, it is noted that Vancouver's average of 3.5% is lower than the metro average of 4.12%, a difference of 0.62% or \$2.2 million. VSTA recommends that further research and investigative work be completed before the Board progresses further with this proposal.

## **8. District direction to secondary schools to not use instructional staffing for non-instructional purposes**

These blocks directly increase class sizes and restrict a school's ability to offer electives or specialty courses. School-based administrators continue to allocate teaching blocks for non-instructional purposes such as timetabling, computer support, grad transitions, daily physical activity, athletic director, school store, and year book. Clearly, this is not an acceptable use of teaching blocks, and it must be eliminated in ALL secondary schools. It is essential that school-based administrators be directed to cease this practice and use the blocks for instructional purposes only. The VSTA strongly recommends that school-based administrators *be directed* to cease this long-standing practice and that teaching blocks not be used for non-instructional purposes and be used for their intended purpose, direct classroom instruction.

## **9. Calendar Adjustment**

The VSTA strongly opposes the recommendation to close schools for 3 additional days in November. In addition to the consequences that school closure days have on student learning and families, they most directly our teachers on call by further reducing their opportunity for daily work. Additionally, this proposal is not consistent with the recommendation from the District Calendar Committee.

## **10. Parking Fee for School Staff**

To propose that employees pay a monthly parking fee is best described as "salt in the wound." As has been noted numerous times, there is a long history of teachers subsidizing the system. Teachers spend their personal income on basic classroom resources such as pencils/pens, art supplies, paper, white board pens, Kleenex, and nutritious snacks. Teachers also volunteer thousands of hours every year so that the students can partake in extra-curricular activities. To suggest that employees dig even further into their pockets to prop up the district's maintenance and construction costs is unacceptable.

## **11. International Education Program**

The VSTA notes that the projected increase of 100 international students to VSB schools will result in 5.72 FTE additional teachers. Currently, student support for issues of isolation and other health issues is woefully inadequate in secondary schools. The VSB is clearly intent on increasing the number of international students; therefore, it must provide the specialized support required for their transition and success. All students must be provided with the necessary supports required to ensure their academic success and overall wellbeing. The VSTA is recommending a further increase to secondary counselling services for international students.

## **12. Payroll**

The VSTA opposes the proposal to expand the Human Resources Department by hiring a Payroll Coordinator at a cost of \$92,000. Adding 3 new positions in Human Resources while cutting teachers and support staff in no way supports student learning. Let us begin by providing fundamental supports at the school level: resources, classroom teachers and non-enrolling specialists.

## **Concluding Comment**

The VSTA recognizes that this Board is committed to “success for all students.” Any decision to reduce district service will further negatively impact the working and learning conditions in this district. We look forward to working with the Vancouver Board of Education in providing a world-class quality education for each and every student in our district.

Respectfully,



Debbie Pawluk  
President

## Staffing Entitlement - Secondary School-Based Administrators 2007-2014

SCHOOL	2013-14				2012-13				2011-12			
	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	659	40.3480	1.7143	2	680	43.3422	1.7143	2	739	46.7581	1.7143	2
Byng	1312	67.0879	2.1429	3	1332	68.6561	2.1429	3	1358	70.8838	2.1429	3
Churchill	2097	102.4290	3.1429	4	2064	103.9796	3.1429	4	2106	106.4961	3.1429	4
D. Thompson	1724	88.5224	3.1429	4	1832	93.9128	3.1429	4	1849	94.4628	3.0000	4
Gladstone	1144	60.5728	2.1429	3	1231	65.5576	2.1429	3	1251	67.2854	2.1429	3
Hamber	1679	84.3935	2.7143	3	1689	94.0490	2.7143	3	1919	96.5708	2.7143	3
J. Oliver	1141	60.4569	2.1429	3	1160	62.6092	2.1429	3	1156	65.4696	2.1429	3
Killarney	1945	98.8565	3.1429	4	2125	108.3607	3.1429	4 + 1 SBO	2106	107.1881	3.1429	4 + 1 SBO
King George	480	28.1360	1.4286	2	525	30.7184	1.4286	2	530	29.9117	1.4286	3
Kitsilano	1422	67.0543	2.1429	3	1397	73.6170	2.1429	3	1492	77.4282	2.1429	3
Magee	1260	60.9540	2.1429	3	1221	61.4629	2.1429	3	1260	64.9990	2.1429	3
Point Grey	1170	60.4282	2.1429	3	1211	63.5914	2.1429	3	1275	66.4284	2.1429	3
Prince of Wales	1250	65.0555	2.1429	3	1275	67.7257	2.1429	3	1285	68.6658	2.1429	3
Templeton	851	47.6189	1.7143	2	967	53.5896	2.1429	3	1067	59.4997	2.0000	2
Tupper	935	52.7863	1.7143	2	1015	57.6714	1.7143	2	1016	58.3645	1.7143	2
U. Hill	803	38.3888	1.7143	2	690	38.4175	1.4286	2	625	35.4966	1.4286	2
Van Tech	1640	84.6555	2.7143	3	1630	87.3973	2.7143	3	1694	91.3245	2.7143	3
Windermere	1232	63.7788	2.1429	3	1333	69.5544	2.1429	3	1379	72.6425	2.1429	3
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>22744</b>	<b>1171.5233</b>	<b>40.2863</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>23377</b>	<b>1244.2128</b>	<b>40.4292</b>	<b>53 + 1 SBO</b>	<b>24107</b>	<b>1279.8756</b>	<b>40.1434</b>	<b>52 + 1 SBO</b>
SCHOOL	2010-11				2009-10				2007-08			
	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual	Students	FTE	Admin	Actual
Britannia	726	44.7941	1.7143	2	710	45.5120	2.0000	2	780	45.9731	2.0000	2
Byng	1351	71.3094	2.1429	3	1336	74.2242	2.4286	3	1245	66.2617	2.2857	3
Churchill	2106	106.7738	3.1429	4	2109	107.8022	3.5714	4	2081	105.2988	3.5714	4
D. Thompson	1855	93.7074	3.0000	4	1838	95.3489	3.4286	4	1835	92.3738	3.5714	4
Gladstone	1325	72.6928	2.1429	3	1307	75.2204	2.4286	3	1335	73.2266	2.4286	3
Hamber	1732	99.1163	2.7143	3	1647	97.1463	3.0000	3	1658	92.0146	3.0000	3
J. Oliver	1217	66.9045	2.1429	3	1115	64.9590	2.2857	3	1124	61.3044	2.2857	3
Killarney	2010	101.0616	3.1429	4	2013	104.3228	3.5714	3	2010	102.2949	3.5714	3
King George	490	27.6487	1.4286	2	482	29.5760	1.4286	2	496	29.6828	1.4286	2
Kitsilano	1518	77.6740	2.1429	3	1470	77.7662	2.5714	3	1420	77.8235	3.0000	3
Magee	1280	65.1206	2.1429	3	1294	66.3697	2.4286	3	1250	64.2755	2.2857	3
Point Grey	1297	68.9126	2.1429	3	1270	69.6313	2.4286	3	1270	70.2684	2.4286	3
Prince of Wales	1265	67.5193	2.1429	3	1295	69.5643	2.4286	4	1468	71.4389	2.2857	3
Templeton	1097	58.3890	2.0000	3	1087	59.3430	2.2857	3	1058	57.9321	2.2857	3
Tupper	1033	58.8521	1.7143	2	966	57.0801	2.0000	2	947	53.0886	2.0000	2
U. Hill	616	34.6560	1.4286	2	595	35.6185	1.4286	2	582	34.3857	1.4286	2
Van Tech	1667	92.0560	2.7143	3	1663	95.1791	3.0000	3	1661	90.4923	3.0000	3
Windermere	1322	70.0297	2.1429	3	1313	71.6971	2.4286	3	1330	70.4828	2.2857	3
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>23907</b>	<b>1277.2179</b>	<b>40.1434</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>23510</b>	<b>1296.3611</b>	<b>45.1430</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>23550</b>	<b>1258.6185</b>	<b>45.1428</b>	<b>52</b>